

## Framework for Creating Successful Community Partnerships

As communities embark upon the development of Interagency Memorandums of Agreement it is important for everyone to be on the same page, or to say this in another way, working from the same understanding of the following concepts: 1) what is an MOA and 2) what value will an MOA have for early childhood education programs in the community.

### ***What is an MOA?***

The concept of an MOA is fairly basic. It is a document that defines mutually agreed upon roles and expectations or goals of agencies or organizations related to a specific issue. These are written into a document that is formatted to include these sections: 1) names of partner agencies and organizations, 2) statement of purpose, 3) expectations or goals, and 4) signatures of all agencies and organizations committed to the successful accomplishment of the expectations or goals of the MOA.

### ***What value will an MOA have for early childhood education programs in the community?***

Most often when the concept of *collaboration* is talked about, people believe they already interact with one another at a collaborative level. When the components and criteria for collaboration are defined, along with those of *cooperation* and *coordination*, most often agencies and organizations discover they work together at the levels of cooperation and coordination. The definitions of each of these levels of partnerships are below.

*Cooperation* - the act of working together to achieve a common aim, doing what is asked or required

*Coordination* - the combining of diverse parts or groups to make a unit, or way these parts work together

*Collaboration* - the act of combining diverse groups to make a unit by blending or intermingling of fiscal and material resources

Communities will find that working through the MOA planning process supports agencies and organizations in moving toward the level of collaboration which results in efficient utilization of interagency resources. This includes the:

- ◆ identification of individual agency and organization regulations,
- ◆ identification of the activities that are currently implemented in each program area,

- ♦ determination of area(s) of duplication and gap(s),
- ♦ prioritization of needs,
- ♦ development of goals or expectations,
- ♦ development of strategies or activities, and
- ♦ determination of criteria to measure success.

The process described above leads to the provision of integrated early childhood education and related services to young children and their families in their communities in a manner which promotes interagency partnerships resulting in effective and efficient utilization of resources. In addition, families receive services in a seamless fashion which reduces duplication, increases trust, and reduces stress.

### ***Foundation for Effective Collaboration***

For a collaboration to be effective, representatives of all partner agencies should remember that collaborations are based on:

- ♦ Trust, openness, and mutual concern
- ♦ Effective open communication strategies
- ♦ Clearly defined missions of each participating partner agency
- ♦ Understand and respect for the mission of each partner agency
- ♦ Recognition of and respect for what each partner does well
- ♦ Willingness to share resources for the benefit of all
- ♦ Patience, flexibility, and adaptability
- ♦ Respect each partner agency's need for autonomy

### ***Framework for Developing Local Interagency Memorandums of Agreement***

The following is a framework for local programs to use which will lead to the creation of practical and functional Interagency Memorandums of Agreement. These Agreements specify how communities plan to address the components of the early childhood program. These might include: 1) designing an inclusive program, 2) enrolling children, 3) hiring staff, 4) selecting a curriculum, 5) providing professional development, 6) implementing assessment strategies for children, 7) planning for transition into kindergarten, and 8) integration of funding.

### Developing an Interagency Memorandum of Agreement

1. Determine stakeholders who should be involved in the development of the MOA. In addition to the LEA, community stakeholders might include ESU, Head Start, early childhood care and education providers, Even Start, Title I, Early Childhood Special Education.
2. Schedule an orientation meeting and invite stakeholders.
3. Facilitate the orientation meeting with an agenda that might include these topics:
  - ◆ Discuss purpose of the MOA
  - ◆ Distribute MOA framework documents and review sections
  - ◆ Identify participants' commitment to collaboration
  - ◆ Facilitate a discussion on how to proceed with the MOA
  - ◆ Identify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and
  - ◆ Schedule future meetings.
4. During subsequent meetings, complete *INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT PLANNING FORM* and incorporate information into the MOA.
5. Acquire appropriate signatures.
6. Meet at least annually with stakeholders to review and update the MOA.



## Interagency Memorandum of Agreement Planning Form

1 Program component	2 What do your agency regulations say?	3 How does your agency meet these regulations?	4 What can we do together to meet all agency regulations?	5 What strategies or activities can we do to achieve our goals?	6 How will you know you have met your goals?